A STILL AND SOFT VOICE From the Scriptures,

VVitnessing them to be the VVord of God.

(William Walwyn)

1 Kings. 19. 11. 12.

And he said (to Eliah) come out and stand upon the Mount before the Lord. And behold the Lord went by, and a mighty strong wind rent the Mountaines and brake the Rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind came an Earth-quake, but the Lord was not in the Earth-quake.

And after the Earth-quake came fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire came a still and soft voice. And when Eliah heard it, he covered his face with a Mantle, &c.

Printed in the Yeare, 1647.

A

A Still and Soft Voice.

As he who is arrived to the full age of a man, and ſeriouſly conſiders, the ſeverall paſſages and progreſſe of his fore paſt life: what he did or underſtood, when he was a child, a youth, a young man, a meere man, or before he came to be adviſed, and to conſider all things by *true rules* of reaſon: is beſt able to deale with every one in every age and condition, to ſhew them their vanity, ignorance and miſtakings: and to point them out the path of vertue. Experience making the beſt Schoole-maſter in things naturall and morall.

Even ſo is it in Religion, he only can beſt judge, adviſe and counſell others, who hath obſerved and *moſt ſeriouſly conſidered* the ſeverall paſſages and progreſſe of his owne knowledge in things divine: yet who are ſo forward to judge and comptrole therein, as meere ſmatterers and ſuch as have leaſt experience.

I ſuppoſe it will be acknowledged, by all experienced Chriſtians, that the greateſt number of men and women in the world, are drawne into the conſideration and Practice of Religion, by education, and cuſtome of the place where they are bred: and that

many never have any other foundation, nor motive to continue therein, then the reputation it brings them: all other religions or wayes of worſhip being diſcountenanced and out of credit, ſuch as theſe are Champions for whats in faſhion: ever running with the ſtreame, and crying downe all contrary minded; *Vox populi, Vox dei*, the Major voice (then which nothing is more uncertain in Religion) is to theſe as the voice of God: and when they are zealous for *vulgar opinions* they thinke they are zealous for God and his truth: when they revile, abuſe, and hale men before the Magiſtrates, and even kill and deſtroy them, they think they doe God good ſervice: being zealous of the *traditions of the times*: for though truth ſhould be publickly profeſſed: yet to ſuch as hold it only by education and cuſtome: it is in them traditionall, and they are not truly religious; but meere morrall chriſtians: utterly ignorrant of the cleare Heavenly brightneſſe, inherent, in pure and undefiled Religion.

But though it be evident, that there are too too many, who hold their religion, on this fraile foundation, yet it is very comfortable to behold, the ſincerity of multitudes of good people in our dayes: who; not content to poſſeſſe their knowledg in a traditionall way: doe accuſtome themſelves to try and examine all things.

Yet as it is a hard thing unto men, bred ſo vainly as moſt men are, to keepe the golden meane, in naturall or morrall Reformations: ſo is it difficult to preſerve from extreames, in matters of religion, the reaſon is, becauſe in our tryalls and examinations,

ons, we have not that heedfull care, which is abſolutely neceſſary, to free our Judgments from *abſurdityes or improper things*: common and uvlgar arguments catching faſt hold upon us too ſuddenly; and ſo we engage over violently, averring and maintayning without giving due time to our conſideration to worke and debate it ſelfe into neceſſary concluſions.

The firſt ſort of theſe religious perſons: are deadly enemies to examination and tryall of things, we (ſay they) are not fit to Judge of theſe matters *ne ſutor ultra crepidam*, is commonly in their mouthes: *the Cobler ought not to goe beyond his laſt*: what are the learned for, if theſe high things fall within the compaſſe of our capacities, why chuſe wee wiſe and judicious men, more able then our ſelves, but to reforme, and ſettle Religion: if you draw them into any diſcourſe, and endeavour to ſhew them their weakeneſſe, their only aime is how to entrap you, in your words, and if it be poſſible to make you obnoctious to authority.

If their ignorance and ſuperſtition appeare ſo groſſe and palpable, that (in loving tearmes, and for their better information,) you demand how they come to know there is a God, or that the ſcriptures are the word of God: their common anſwer is, *doe you deny them: it ſeemes you doe? otherwiſe why doe you aske ſuch queſtions?* if they offer to proove by ſome common received argument: and you ſhew the weakeneſſe thereof: they'le goe nigh to tell you to your face, and report for certaine behind your back, to all they know, or can know, that you are an Athieſt, that you deny there is a God, and deny the

Scriptures

Scriptures to be the word of God: nor doe they hate any sort of men so much, as those who are *inquisitive after knowledge*, judgeing them as busie bodyes, men of unquiet spirits, that know not when they are well, or when they have sufficient: for their parts, they are constant in one, for the substance; their principles are not of yesterday but of many yeares standing: and the most learned and wise are of their way, and why should not others be as well content as they, is it fit (say they) that every one should follw his owne understanding in the worship of God, wee see what comes of it; when men once forsake the beaten Road (the Kings high way) in Religion, into how many by-pathes, doe they runne, nay, whether would they not runne, if our care were not to hedg and keepe them in.

And thus ignorance becomes many times Judge of knowledge: and the most grosse and slothfull; comptroler of the most active in Religion.

Of this sort of men there are very many; and they are made very much use of by worldly Pollititians, who have found by constant experience, that superstition is the easiest meanes to lead a multitude, this way, or that way as their occasions and purposes may require, and on the contrary, that true Religion is in it selfe as oppsite to their unjust ends, as it is to superstition and therefore if they observe any man who out of the principles of true Religion oppoſeth their ends; at him they let loose these ignorant and morrall christians, furnish them with reproachfull tales, and fal shoods, against him, call him Atheist Infidell, Heritick, Scismatick, any thing: which is as eagerly effected, as wickedly devised: and how to stop these mens mouthes is in my apprehention

no leſſe a worke then to make white a Blackamore.

Thoſe others who are ſtartled in their conſciences, and rouſed by *the word of God*, out of this worldly way of religion, or running with the ſtreame, it is a hard matter to hold them *to a due pace, in the perſute of neceſſary knowledge* or to keepe them *to a propper Method*, or to obtaine this of them, *that they receive nothing as a truth, which they ſee admiteth of an abſurdity.*

But having broke looſe from the bands *of educated and cuſtomary religion*, through neceſſity of conſcience, and being *anew to begin*, they are apt *haſtily to take in*, that which is firſt offered *with any reſemblance of truth*, and ſo in an inſtant, fall into new entanglements.

For if haſt, make waſt in any thing, it is in purſute after knowledge: and though every conſiderate mans experience findeth this a truth: though it be confeſt by all, that there is nothing of greatet concernment to man, then *the truth of his Divine knowledge*: though nothing doth more diſturb the minde of man, *then error and miſtakeing in religion*.

Yet is there not any thing wherein men: proceed more irregularly, or more impatiently: either they are over raſh and ſudden or over fearfull, and irreſolute: they approach all diſcourſe with prejudice, and a mind diſtempered, ſearching nothing throughly or orderly, but content themſelves with an overly examination, and (in my apprehention) are not ſo diſingenious in any thing, as in religion: willingly reſigning and forfeiting their underſtandings, and Judgments, at a cheap rate then Eſau did his Birthright: and ſo continue *very long* (not truly religious,

not

but) ſuperſtitious men, alwayes amazed: neither remembring what themſelves or others ſpeake: he that once oppoſeth them, hath a Wolfe by the eares, hee can neither ſpeake, nor hold his peace, without damage, they take allthings in the worſt ſence ſigh, lament, pitty, or cenſure, all that ſutes not with their opinion or practice: and talk or report of, any man, any thing that comes in their imaginations; thoſe that come behind them in knowledge; are carnall: thoſe before them deſperate And therefore it may be very profitable; that the differences betwene true Religion and ſuperſtition, be made knowne *to theſe times*, more fully than it is, the one being commonly taken for the other.

Now both are beſt knowne by their effects: for true Religion ſetleth a man in peace and reſt: makes him like unto the Angels, alwayes praiſing God and saying Glory to God on High, in earth peace, Good will towards men, it is ever provided with good intentions and good deſires, maketh the beſt conſtruction in doubtfull caſes, ſee how true Chriſtian love is deſcribed by the Apoſtle in the 13. to the Corinths. and that is the *true* Religious mans Character.

On the contrary, ſuperſtition troubleth and makes a man wilde, a ſuperſtitious man ſuffereth neither God nor man to live in peace, (as one well obſerveth from experience) he aprehendeth God, as one anxious, ſpitefull, hardly contented eaſily moved, with difficulty appeaſed, examining our actions after the human faſhion of a ſevere Judge, that watcheth our ſteps, which hee prooveth true by his manner of ſerving him, hee trembleth for feare is never ſecure, fearing he never doth well, and that he hath left ſomething

some thing undone, by omission whereof, all is worth nothing that he hath done.

But generally now a dayes, (contrary to former tymes) the superstitious mans devotion costs him litle, he hath so much worldly wit in his zeale, as to save his purse, hot and fiery against heresie and blasphemy, (which are titles he freely bestowes on all opinions, contrary to his own, true or false), he will course his poor neighbour out of all he hath, yea out of the Nation, if he can not course him *into his opinion*: and all upon pretence of doing God service and for the good of his soule.

As for his body, or estate, thats no part of his care, hee is not so hasty to runn into his poore neighbours house, to see what is wanting there, hee may ly upon a bed, or no bed, covering or no covering, be starved through cold and hunger, over burthened with labour, be sick, lame or diseased: and all this troubles not the superstitious mans (nor the morall Christians) Conscience: he may through want and necessity goe into what prison he will, and ly and rott and starve there: and these kind of Religious people are not halfe so much moved at it, as if he goe to another Church or congregation, then what they approove: if hee doe so, upstarts their zeale; and after him, watch, spy, accuse and informe: and all for the good of his soule: and for the Glory of God.

One would not think it were possible man could be so blind, or so inconsiderate as to immagin, that God would be thus mocked, thus madly served, contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, but such are the effects of *educated, customary or superstitious* Religion.

Whilst the effects of pure and undefiled Religion, are another thing: as Feeding the hungry, Cloathing the naked, Visiting the sick, the Fatherlesse, the Widdowes and Prisoners

ners: and in all things *walking as becometh the Gospell of Christ*: it will empty the fulleſt Baggs: and pluck downe the higheſt plumes.

And who ever ſerveth God ſincerely in this Religion, ſhall be knowne by his fruites: his light ſhall ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing *his good Workes*, ſhall Glorify our Father which is in heaven.

But of theſe there are few to bee found; and as few that truly labour, to reclaime thoſe many thouſands of miſerable people that are drencht all their life long in groſſe ignorance, and notorious loathſome wickedneſſe: *Yet there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more then for ninety nine juſt perſons that need no repentance*: Why talke wee ſo much of Chriſtianity, holineſſe, and ſaintſhip, whilſt wee neglect the loſt ſheep, or the recovery of our brethren from thoſe *Errors* of their wayes.

The plain truth is, this groſſe neglect of known duty herein, and the generall eagerneſſe in the leſſe neceſſary parts of zeale and devotion, manifeſteth *the world* is not ſubdued; that there is little ſelfe-deniall, little of pure and undefiled Religion as yet in the world: men content themſelves with forms of godlineſſe, but are regardleſſe of the power thereof.

And therefore I have been the leſſe troubled in my ſelfe; for the hard meaſure I have found: amidſt ſo great a mixture of worldlineſſe, ignorance, and ſuperſtitious zeale, why ſhould one looke for much ingenuity, theſe times have but caſt an eye towards the *materiall* parts of true Chriſtianity: It is not yet knowne what it is, in its excellency, the end and iſſue thereof, is too good to bee deſerved, or diſcerned, by a people that are not yet broad awake, they ſtrike him that brings them more light; then they can well endure.

All the evill and reproach I have ſuffered, hath beene by occaſion of my forwardneſſe to do others good: my freeneſſe in

in diſcourſe, though harmeleſſe in it ſelfe, and intended for good, hath been perverted, miſconſtrued, and made uſe of to my prejudice.

I accompt nothing more vain, then to diſcourſe meerly for diſcourſe ſake, nay, it is painfull and irckſome to me, to heare a diſcourſe that is not really neceſſary and uſefull, nor doe I know, that I have ever purpoſely ſet my ſelf to debate any ſerious matter, ſlightly or careleſſely, though cheerefully.

And my manner is, what ever is in debate, to ſearch it thorowly, being of an opinion, that, what is really true, ſtands the firmer, for being ſhaken: like a houſe that is built upon a rock.

I have been much troubled, to obſerve men earneſtly engage to maintaine the ſtrongeſt maximes and principles by weak arguments; the weakneſſe whereof, I have endevoured to manifeſt, that I might diſcover the weakneſſe of ſuch practiſes, and to make it evident, that fundamentall truthes ſupport all things, and need no ſupporters: *Thou beareſt not the root, but the root, thee.*

But this my free dealing (with uncharitable or ſuperſtitious people) hath found this evill returne, they have reported me, to deny that there is a God, when I have only denyed the validity of a weak argument, produced to prove that there is a God; it being too too common to inſiſt upon meere notionall indigeſted arguments: ſo alſo have I been moſt uncharitably ſlandered to deny the Scriptures to bee the word of God, becauſe I have oppoſed inſufficient arguments produced to prove them ſuch: and becauſe at the ſame time I have refuſed to ſhew the grounds inducing me to beleeve them.

Now it hath been my lot to be drawne into diſcourſes of this nature for the moſt part by timerous, ſcrupulous, people, in whom, I have diſcovered ſo much impatience, and diſcontent, at the ſhaking of their arguments, that I have not diſcerned any reaſon to open my ſelfe at that time; yet I never

 parted

parted with any of them, but I alwayes professed that I did believe, both that there is a God, & that the Scriptures are the Word of God, though I judged their grounds not good; and withall, that if they would be so ingenious as to acknowledge the weakneſſe of their arguments, I would then ſhew them my ground of faith; or if at any time they ſtood in need, I would not be wanting to the uttermoſt of my power to ſupply them, but I have ſeldome found any, who in the heat of conteſt and proſecution of diſpute, have been qualified, to receive, what I had to ſay, touching this matter, their apprehenſion and mine being at too great a diſtance therein.

But I bleſſe God it is not ſo ill with me, as ſome bad minded men deſire, nor as ſome weak and ſcrupulous men imagin.

And there are ſome ingenious men, with whom I have daily converſt, that know I doe acknowledge and beleeve there is a God, and that the Scriptures are the Word of God.

Yet the teſtimony of men in this caſe to mee is little; my owne conſcience being as a thouſand witneſſes.

That there is a God: I did never beleeve through any convincing power I have ever diſcerned by my utmoſt conſideration of any natural argument or reaſon I ever heard or read: But it is *an unexpreſſible power*, that in a forcible manner conſtraines my underſtanding to acknowledge and beleeve that there is a God, and ſo to beleeve that I am fully perſwaded there is no *conſiderat man* in the world but doth believe there is a God.

And, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*, I ſhall clearly make the ſame profeſſion, That I have not beleeved them ſo to be, by force of any argument I have ever heard or read, I rather find by experience, moſt, if not all arguments, produced *in prejudice* thereof: (Art, argument, and compulſive

power,

power, in this case holding resemblance with the mighty strong *wind*, the *Earth quake* and fire, distracting, terrifying and scorching the minds of men) but I beleeve them through an irresistible perswasive power that from within them (like unto the soft still voyce wherein God was) hath pierced my judgment and affection in such sort, that with aboundance of joy and gladnesse I beleeve, and in beleeving have that *Peace* which passeth all utterance or expression, and which hath appeared unto me after so many sad conflicts of a distracted conscience, and wounded spirit, that it is to me a heaven upon earth: It being now long since, I blesse God, that I can truly say, *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise:* In other respects, I conceive the most holy upon earth, if they give impartiall care to this voyce, will finde no cause to boast or to finde fault with others, but as *Eliah* to cover their faces with a mantle.

And truly were it not that too too many *pretenders to Religion*, are over apt to receive false reports (which is a most uncharitable disposition) and over prone to make the worst construction, which is altogether unchristian, it had beene impossible for any to have abused me in these or any other respects.

But it will be needfull for all such, seriously to lay to heart, *that they ought to do as they would be done unto in all things, that he who seemeth to bee religious and bridles not his tongue, that mans religion is vaine.*

That he who boasteth *to beleeve a God*, and *the Scriptures to be the Word of God*, and glorieth in his ability of exposition thereof: yet applieth it to the discovery of a mote in his brothers eye, rather then a beame in his own: he whose expressions and actions do demonstrate him to say within himselfe, *Lord I thank thee I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, nor as this Publican:* This man who ever he be, is not

yet got through the leſſon of the Phariſies; *that were wiſe in their owne eyes, and deſpiſed others.*

But it would be much more profitable to ſociety and good neighbourhood that there were a more exact accompt taken by every man of his owne wayes; it is verily thought moſt men neede not goe abroad for want of work, if either pride, covetouſneſſe, backbiting, unreaſonable jealoſy, vanity of minde, dotage upon ſuperfluities? with hard heartedneſſe to the poore: were thought worthy of Reformation.

To be zealous *in lipp ſervice*, or to expreſſe our devotion, *in cenſuring of others*, yeelds neither honour to God, nor good to man.

Who were more blinde, then thoſe who ſaid *are wee blind, alſo?* the Angell of the Church of Laodicea, boaſted that he was rich, and increaſed with goods and *had neede of nothing*: and knew not that he was *wretched, and miſerable and poor and blind and naked.*

Wee have many now a dayes, who are *doubly unjuſt* and thinke not of it: they are partiall and favourable in examining and corecting of themſelves: and ſevere towards others, when as they ought to be ſevere towards themſelves: and favourable towards others.

And it is a fault not eaſily mended: it requires a greater power of true religion to doe it, then the moſt have as yet attained, if one may judge by the Fruites: and therefore it will be good for every one to neglect that which is behinde, and to preſſe forward to the marke, for the price of the high Calling of God which is in Jeſus Chriſt: either renounce the Name, or let your practice demonſtrate, that you are a Chriſtian.

Hee who greedily receiveth a hard report of his neighbour, is not provided of charitable and loving thoughts as he ought; and if he report any evill, before he be certaine of the truth

truth thereof, hee is a ſlanderer; and when hee is certaine it is true, if he report it with delight, it argues him of malice.

He who is glad of his neighbours defamation, would not be ſory at his ruine: a ſlanderer would be a murderer but for feare: and therefore, every honeſt vertuous religious man ſhould ſhun a ſlanderer, as he would ſhun a Serpent.

And thus having ſaid enough to free my ſelf from this ſlander (if religious people will but ſtudy ingenuity, which hath been too much wanting amongſt them) the whole courſe of my actions, writings and diſcourſes, evidencing the contrary to all that throughly know me: and this my profeſſion being added to, ſatisfie thoſe that know me but by hearſay: *I have done*: judging it a ſmall thing to be judged of any, or of mans judgement; *Whoart thou that judgeſt another mans ſervant, to his owne maſter, hee ſtandeth or falleth.*

The liberty of my native Country, and the freedome of all conſciencious people hath been, and ſtill is pretious in my eſteeme: nor ſhall I be diſcouraged (by any the unworthy ſlanders caſt upon me) from a juſt and due proſecution of both, according to my place and calling: I ſhall make *bold to deceive the deceiver and his inſtruments therein*: I ſhould be glad to ſee the Educated and cuſtomary morall Chriſtians become Chriſtians indeed, and ceaſe to perſecute: I ſhould exceedingly rejoyce to ſee the ſuperſtitious, become really religious, and to ſee babes; become ſtrong men in Chriſt, and all bend their endevours to deliver the captive, and ſet the oppreſſed free, to reclaime the vicious, and to labour the ſaving of the loſt ſheep of the houſe of *England*: To ſee Charity abound, and all envy, malice, and worldly mindedneſſe to ceaſe for ever, and not to be named amongſt us, as becometh *Saints indeed*: to ſee all men ingenious, loving, friendly and tender-hearted one towards another: but I muſt neither be ſilent, nor ſlothfull till I ſee it, nor ſorow as one without

our

out hope of seeing it: but through evill report, and good report, do my duty: patiently expecting a good issue: laboring in all estates to be content; knowing there is no temptation hath taken hold upon others, but may befall unto me. In the mean time, knowing all terrestriall things to be but vain and transitory, my chiefest comfort is, that I desire to know *Nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified:* accounting all things as losse and dung, that I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousnesse which is of the Law, but the righteousnesse which is of God in him.

I have no quarrell to any man, either for unbeleefe or misbeleefe, because I judge no man beleeveth any thing, but what he cannot choose but beleeve; it is misery enough to want the comfort of true beleeving, and I judge the most convincing argument that any man can hold forth unto another, to prove himselfe a true sincere beleever, is to practise to *the uttermost* that which his faith binds him unto: more of the *deeds of Christians*, and fewer of the arguments would doe a great deale more good to the establishing of those that stagger: It being not the leaves but the fruit that nourisheth and carrieth the seed with it, Shew me thy faith by thy workes; If I have all faith and have not love, I am as sounding brasse, or as a tinckling cymball, if faith worke, it workes by love: Let us all therefore hence-forth walk in love, even as Christ hath loved, and hath given himselfe an offering and a sacrifice for us: to whom bee glory and dominion for ever. *Amen.*

By WILLIAM WALWYN, *Merchant.*
(there being a Minister of the same name.)

FINIS.